the annual accounts of financial year 2001-02. In case of a consortium bid, the financial parameters of the lead bidder must be at least 51% of the amount indicated above.

(c) As on 31.3.2002, the fixed assets of FACT as per audited accounts are Rs.781.22 crore and the net current assets, as on 30.9.2002, are Rs.306.93crore.

Melting of Glaciers of Himalayas

2396. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Is a blanket of smog chocking South Asia" appearing in the Times of India dated the 13th August, 2001;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that a recent study by the Delhi University in Kullu Valley has revealed that 67 per cent of the 1500 major Glaciers in the Himalayas are receding, which could result in abrupt transition in climatic conditions, causing rise of 9.88 cm in sea level by 2100 and erosion of low lying areas; and

(c) if so, what is Government's perception about this new phenomenon and the steps being contemplated, so that such a situation could be averted?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir. An international collaborative study namely, "Indian Ocean Research Experiment (INDOEX)" has indicated haze over the Indian Ocean. The haze is not a permanent feature of the atmosphere over the Asian region and the surrounding seas. It occurs only during January -March, the season in which INDOEX observations were made in 1999. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has, this year, brought out a report entitled "The Asian Brown Cloud: Climate and other Environmental Impacts" based on INDOEX. The press release of the UNEP launching the said report paints an alarming picture of the impacts of this baze on both regional and global scales. However, most of the concerns expressed therein are not well substantiated by reliable modeling studies or experimental observations.

(b) The University of Delhi has conducted studies in Kullu Valley on land use patterns and not on blanket of smog or on the recession of Himalayan Glaciers, sea level rise and erosion of low lying areas. However, according to the Geological survey of India, as per the inventory of Himalayan Glaciers, the Indian part of Himalaya has more than 7500 glaciers of all dimensions. There are only 365 major glaciers more than 5 km in length (excluding Shyok and Kishanganga basins). The studies conducted by the Survey reveal that the majority of them are receding. The rate of recession in different climate zones of Himalaya is found to be variable in different years. Therefore, the studies confine to Kullu Valley may not give the overall natural cyclic process. The earth has witnessed several phases of glacial and interglacial period. It is a natural phenomenon. Presently the earth is passing through an interglacial phase whereby the ice bodies throughout the world are receding and the recession of glacier is a natural phenomenon and could also be attributed to global warming.

(c) Regarding smog, it may be mentioned that the existing legal and policy framework supported by several initiatives to protect and improve the environment, addresses the concerns of air pollution in India. Regarding recession of the Himalayan Glaciers, the Government is aware of the environmental concerns and has supported conservation activities in the Himalayan region including afforestation, establishment of community toilets, and removal of garbage and promotion of eco-tourism.

Discussion on Farm Subsidies at Earth Summit

2397. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India demanded in the recent Earth Summit at Johannesburg, that the developed countries should lift farm subsidies; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the developed countries thereto?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) During the discussion on agriculture in the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, issues related to the impact of trade policies that support micro enterprises, value added agricultural products and re-direction of agricultural subsidies to poverty